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Letter dated 24 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, and with reference to the letter dated 17 August 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/641), requesting to circulate an annexed letter of an entity engaged in crimes and violence in Syria, while I strongly reject all the allegations against my country contained in that letter, I wish to bring the following to your attention:

1. The very act of submitting such baseless propaganda against a Member State by another Member State to be circulated as a document of the United Nations runs counter to the very purposes and principles of the United Nations, which consist, inter alia, of developing friendly relations among nations and peacefully resolving international disputes.

2. This act also amounts to misusing an established practice at the United Nations and employing it in the service of spreading lies and distorting facts, which can only serve short-sighted political interests and narrow agendas. This certainly aggravates rather than eases tensions and is contrary to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

3. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always warned against terrorism and violent extremism and the provision of support to extremists in the region. It is imperative for all Member States to adopt a responsible and serious approach in order to focus on real challenges that jeopardize peace and security in our region.

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gholamali **Khoshroo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

15-16378 (E) 300915

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 43 of Security Council resolution 2211 (2015). It covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since my report of 26 June 2015 (S/2015/486), including with regard to the situation on the ground and progress made by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the implementation of its commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region; the electoral process; and progress made by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in the implementation of its mandate. The report also includes an assessment of the outcomes of the strategic dialogue with the Congolese authorities on the exit strategy of MONUSCO.

II. Major developments

A. Political developments

2. Consultations between the Government and stakeholders across the political spectrum on the electoral process continued. In his Independence Day speech on 30 June, President Joseph Kabila indicated that this would eventually lead to a national dialogue among the ruling majority coalition, the political opposition and civil society. According to the Government, the dialogue would focus on the electoral calendar; the registration of several million voters who had become eligible since 2011; the financing of the electoral process; and elections security. The Government indicated that the possibility of international mediation or facilitation of the dialogue was still under consideration.

3. The announcement of the holding of the dialogue prompted mixed reactions. On 26 June, the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo issued a communiqué expressing support for a national dialogue that would respect the existing constitutional and institutional framework. The Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo also suggested that local elections be postponed until after the holding of the 2016 national elections. The media quoted a number of political actors, including

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some from the ruling coalition, expressing concern that a national dialogue risked paving the way for a modification of the Constitution, including with regard to the provisions relating to the presidential term limit. On 13 August, the opposition party Union pour la nation congolaise warned in a statement that a dialogue would endorse a "constitutional coup d'état". A number of opposition parties announced that they would not take part in the proposed dialogue, arguing that it could be used to justify postponing presidential elections to extend the President's term.

4. The opposition party of Etienne Tshisekedi, Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), reaffirmed that it would participate in the dialogue, provided that it was held under international mediation. On 17 August, the Secretary-General of UDPS, Bruno Mavungu, reiterated that it would not compromise on the constitutional deadline for the holding of the presidential polls. On 13 September, UDPS pulled out of the consultations with the Government on the dialogue and called upon national stakeholders to ensure the elaboration of a consensual electoral calendar in line with the Constitution and a peaceful transfer of power.

5. Controversy continued to surround the technical feasibility of holding local elections, scheduled for October 2015. In addition to the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo, several political stakeholders from both the ruling majority coalition and the political opposition called for local elections to be postponed until after the national elections in 2016. In doing so, they underscored the risk of additional delays resulting from significant financial, logistical, legal and technical requirements for the organization of local polls across the country and their impact on the holding of the 2016 elections.

6. The Government continued to press for rapid adoption of the draft law on the allocation of seats for the local elections. On 4 July, the National Assembly and the Senate opened an extraordinary session to examine the law. Despite continued criticism by members of the opposition regarding the text, it was adopted without debate by the National Assembly on 25 July. The Senate failed to reach consensus. However, during a second, short extraordinary session, on 11 August, the Senate adopted the law without debate in the absence of the opposition parties that boycotted the vote. On 13 August, the opposition party Mouvement pour le renouveau challenged the adoption of the law by filing a complaint with the Constitutional Court, claiming that the second extraordinary session of the Senate had been held in violation of constitutional provisions and the Senate's internal rules. President Kabila promulgated the law on 25 August.

7. Preparations for both local and provincial polls scheduled for 25 October by the national independent electoral commission were hampered by delays in the adoption of outstanding legislation; the découpage (increasing the number of provinces from 11 to 26); the lack of consensus about the sequencing of the polls; and insufficient funding. As at 20 August, some 10 per cent of the approximately $900 million estimated by the Government for elections had been disbursed, totalling $95.18 million. The adoption of a disbursement plan by the Government for the $900 million budgeted for the local, municipal, provincial, general and presidential elections is still outstanding.

8. At the request of the national independent electoral commission, the International Organization of la Francophonie carried out an audit in July, with the participation of political parties and civil society, of the 2011 national voters' register, which had been deemed flawed by some national stakeholders and

international observers. The progress report on the audit, made public on 31 July, highlighted several major issues affecting the voters' register, including the need to update it to include persons having reached the legal voting age since 2011. The national independent electoral commission's initial assessment was that addressing these issues could lead to further delays in the electoral process.

9. There were also delays in the organization of the gubernatorial elections. As the installation of the 21 new provinces proceeded as part of the découpage, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Evariste Boshab requested the national independent electoral commission to begin planning the election of new governors. On 28 July, the commission issued a calendar setting 6 October as the date for the gubernatorial polls.

10. During hearings held before the Constitutional Court on 4 September following a request from the national independent electoral commission for an advisory opinion, the Prime Minister, Augustin Matata Ponyo, stated that the Government did not have the funds needed for the gubernatorial elections. On 8 September, the Court issued its decision, ruling that the combination of legal ambiguities in the relevant laws and the lack of funding from the Government constituted circumstances of force majeure, rendering it impossible to organize the gubernatorial elections. In its ruling, the Constitutional Court referred to the Government's position that the inability to comply with the time frame foreseen for the découpage process created a chaotic situation that threatened public security and order. As a result, the Court ordered the Government to put in place transitory governing arrangements to ensure security and order in the 21 provinces and to disburse the funds necessary for holding the gubernatorial polls. The Court also directed the national independent electoral commission to revise the global electoral calendar, while stipulating that the gubernatorial elections must precede the holding of provincial elections. On 14 September, reacting to the extraordinary session of the Senate on 11 August and the ruling of the Constitutional Court on 8 September, a group of seven political parties (the "G7") from the ruling coalition wrote a letter to President Kabila warning of the risks of destabilization of the country if the Constitution was violated and called for local elections to be held after the national and provincial elections. On 16 September, the "G7" was expelled from the ruling coalition.

B. Progress in the implementation of national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

11. The Government, through the National Oversight Mechanism, took steps to help to ensure that priority actions identified to further the implementation of the six national engagements of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework were allocated sufficient funding in the draft 2016 budget.

Decentralization

12. The administrative establishment of 21 new provinces was formally completed on 19 July. The total number of provinces now stands at 26. As at 1 August, the 11 previous provincial assemblies were restructured into 26 and established their provisional bureau, as envisaged by the Constitution. However, they lack the

necessary resources or infrastructure to function. As outlined in paragraph 10 above, the gubernatorial elections have been postponed and there is currently no provincial executive.

13. Tensions began to emerge in the context of the découpage and gubernatorial elections. In the territory of Katako-Kombe in Sankuru province, the local population opposed the installation of a new police sub-station. Clashes on 7 July led to the killing of one police officer and the wounding of another; one police sub-station and a number of homes were also burned down near the locality of Tomana. In Ituri province, various sectors contested the legitimacy of the Head of District remaining in place as the interim executive, given his appointment by the Governor of the former Province Orientale. On 8 September, 100 Ituri citizens sent an open letter to President Kabila, pressing for gubernatorial elections to be held immediately.

14. The remaining laws to implement the decentralization process, including the law on public administration at the national, provincial and local levels, were approved during extraordinary sessions in Parliament between 4 July and 2 August. Despite the consensus in support of decentralization as a means of bringing the governing institutions closer to their constituencies, increasing accountability and channelling more revenues to local development, the installation of the new provinces, with no additional resources to support them, drew criticism from various political actors.

Security sector reform

15. In the absence of an approved national strategy, there was limited headway in the overall reform of the security sector. However, there was some progress on key activities foreseen under the 2012-2017 action plan for police reform, including sensitization of the public on the reform process, the establishment of the structure supporting police reform and implementation, training and reinforcement of specialized police personnel, and the construction of infrastructure despite budgetary constraints. The legal framework for police reform is yet to be completed. Seven key decrees needed to further police reforms are still pending, including, most importantly, the decrees on the organization and functioning of the Police Inspectorate General, the responsibilities of administrative authorities in maintaining public order, and joint operations of the armed forces and police in maintaining public order.

Consolidation of State authority and stabilization

16. The Government began implementing the Provincial Stabilization Strategy and Action Plan for North Kivu with the development of a stabilization programme for the Kitchanga area, focusing on land management, security, the restoration of State authority, economic recovery and democratic dialogue. The first meeting of the Board of Directors for the Stabilization Trust Fund, co-chaired by the Ministry of Planning and the United Nations, was held on 23 July. The Board allocated the contribution of $8 million by the Peacebuilding Fund to the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, of which $5 million was earmarked for the Kitchanga programme.

Structural reforms, including financial reforms

17. On 2 August, President Kabila promulgated the Oil and Gas Code, which contains some innovative provisions aimed at improving governance in this resource sector, such as a simplified process for granting oil blocks. The report on the compliance by the Democratic Republic of the Congo during 2013 with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, published on 30 June, suggests that there has been a trend towards growing transparency within the mining and oil sectors. According to the report, companies working in those sectors paid $1.8 billion in taxes and other payments to State revenue agencies during 2013.

Reconciliation, tolerance and democratization

18. As outlined in paragraph 2 above, President Kabila continued to reach out to stakeholders from across the political spectrum in preparation for a national dialogue to reach consensus on the electoral process. However, an increase in arbitrary arrests and reports of harassment of civil society activists and media representatives, in particular in the western part of the country, raised concerns about the restriction of political space and violations of freedom of expression and opinion.

C. Security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and operations against armed groups by national security forces

19. In North Kivu, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) continued to pose a security threat in Beni territory despite progress made in the Sukola I military operations by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo — FARDC), with support from MONUSCO. From 26 June to 6 September, ADF staged several attacks against civilians, killing 51 people and looting property from 156 houses and shops. ADF also continues to demonstrate its capacity to adapt to the sustained pressure from these operations, now preferring to operate in larger groups. On 26 June, ADF attacked Mayi-Moya village, south of Eringeti, in two groups, with one group attacking FARDC positions and the second looting the village. On 23 July, ADF again attacked Mayi-Moya, killing three civilians and burning and looting property. Between 4 and 6 September, ADF killed and decapitated nine civilians in the villages east of Mbau. During the reporting period, FARDC reportedly killed 32 ADF elements.

20. The FARDC Sukola II operations against the Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR) continued at a slow pace across North and South Kivu, without support from MONUSCO. In August, FARDC renewed its efforts, targeting FDLR strongholds in North Kivu at the intersection of Masisi, Rutshuru and Walikale territories. Part of that effort, which has resulted in security voids in other parts of the province, was aimed at targeting FDLR leadership, as the command and control structures of the group have remained largely intact. On 3 August, during a clash near Ihula village, 10 FARDC soldiers and 7 FDLR elements were allegedly killed, with FDLR elements reportedly vacating nearby villages. On 10 August, FDLR attacked an FARDC position east of Walikale centre. One FARDC soldier and three FDLR elements were killed. Renewed clashes between FARDC and FDLR triggered the displacement of several hundred civilians

in the area. On 31 August, six Tanzanian imams, reportedly kidnapped from Katwiguru, Rutshuru territory, at the beginning of September by FDLR elements, were released. Their release is believed to have followed an FARDC offensive on an FDLR position. In South Kivu, FDLR has largely gone into hiding in the Itombwe forest in Mwenga territory. FDLR elements also continued to move from South Kivu into the Mitumba mountain chain in Tanganyika province, mainly to exploit mining sites in the area.

21. The results achieved so far by the Sukola II operations are difficult to confirm. Despite the continuous and consistent efforts of my Special Representative, the Government has not yet agreed to resume joint planning and operations against FDLR. On 4 August, the Government announced that about 400 FDLR elements remained active across the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 28 August, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Raymond Tshibanda, indicated, in a meeting with the diplomatic corps, that the number of FDLR elements left to be neutralized ranged between 600 and 700. MONUSCO is not in a position to confirm any of these figures. However, the Mission has recorded a slight increase in FDLR surrenders since June. Nevertheless, FDLR remained active in North and South Kivu and continued to perpetrate human rights abuses. There were reports suggesting that FDLR continued to form alliances with Congolese armed groups, mainly Mayi-Mayi Nyatura in North Kivu. On 5 July, FDLR and suspected Mayi-Mayi Nyatura elements looted a centre where Rwandan refugees were being biometrically registered.

22. In addition, in late June, in North Kivu, FARDC undertook limited operations against Mayi-Mayi Nyatura around Tongo, in Rutshuru territory, triggering the displacement of several thousand civilians. Mayi-Mayi Nyatura elements retreated into Virunga National Park. However, in order to replenish supplies, the group conducted raids on villages, sometimes in collaboration with FDLR, and attacks on underresourced FARDC and Congolese national police posts. In Walikale territory, Mayi-Mayi groups such as Nduma Defence for Congo/Cheka and Mayi-Mayi Raia Mutomboki took advantage of the security vacuum created by the redeployment of FARDC troops and clashed with each other over illegal taxation rackets, prompting the displacement of hundreds of civilians.

23. The security situation remained volatile in some parts of South Kivu. Armed elements believed to be Forces nationales de libération du Burundi (FNL), mainly concentrated in Uvira and Fizi territories, reportedly increased activities from June to July. Mayi-Mayi Raia Mutomboki factions and other Congolese armed groups took advantage of new security gaps resulting from the redeployment of three FARDC regiments to North Kivu for operations against ADF. In Fizi territory, in the Ngandja forest, Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba continued to clash with mainly Banyamulenge armed groups in the region. FARDC has reinforced its presence in this area and MONUSCO has increased patrolling to enhance the protection of civilians.

24. In Ituri province, FARDC operations continued against the Forces de résistance patriotiques de l'Ituri (FRPI), with air and ground support from MONUSCO. During the reporting period, 49 FRPI elements were killed, while 153 others surrendered, and 33 weapons were seized. Despite some progress, there was increasing harassment of the population by the FRPI elements. On 15 and 16 July, FRPI elements allegedly raped three women and two girls at Koni village

near Aveba and, on 1 August, set fire to the houses of a local chief and religious leader near Gety. FRPI also continued to clash with FARDC, with a number of reports of ambushes by FRPI reported from 6 to 8 August in the Gety area, in which at least two FARDC elements were killed.

25. In the provinces of Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé, banditry activities by remnants of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continue to be reported, with a higher incidence of ambushes and looting in the Azande Hunting Domain, Garamba National Park and the areas close to the Mbomu forest. LRA continued to be active on the Dungu-Duru-Nambiapay and Dungu-Faradje-Aba axes. On 6 August, LRA elements reportedly kidnapped two hunters in Nagilidanwe and on 9 August, LRA elements allegedly kidnapped five civilians in Bamunga. FARDC, supported by MONUSCO and the United States Africa Command, continued to conduct operations against LRA in affected areas. MONUSCO supported the operations by establishing a mobile operating base in Nagero, Garamba National Park, from 10 to 25 July. There were also reports of presumed poachers from South Sudan operating in the Park. On 6 August, they reportedly looted a village north of Faradje and kidnapped eight civilians, all of whom were later released.

26. In Tanganyika province, there was an apparent de-escalation in the conflict between the Luba and the Twa communities, largely as a result of the intervention of local and national authorities alongside mediation efforts by MONUSCO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and local actors. FARDC special forces were deployed to Nyunzu and Manono territories. This seems to have yielded initial results, although there were still some targeted killings of women and children reported in both communities, as well as reported human rights violations attributed to the FARDC special forces. On 6 July, around 330 Twa militia elements and their dependants (around 900 people altogether) surrendered to FARDC in Mukebo, north-east of Manono. However, as at 15 August, Twa militia commanders refused to surrender, despite an appeal from the most prominent Twa militia leader, Nyumba-Isha.

D. Humanitarian situation

27. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate in North Kivu and parts of South Kivu during the period under review as a result of armed group activity, ongoing military operations against a number of these groups, inter-community clashes and the refugee influx from Burundi. On 12 July, unidentified armed elements burned a site sheltering internally displaced persons in Bwalanda, in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu, causing more than 30,000 people to flee. The incident also resulted in a temporary suspension of humanitarian activities in the area.

28. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as at 30 June, the total number of internally displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was estimated at 2.9 million. Also according to the Office, an estimated 7 million people are in need of protection and humanitarian assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Of these, approximately 6.6 million are food insecure. North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika and Ituri provinces continue to face high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition.

29. As at 31 July, around 243,000 refugees had been recorded by UNHCR in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including over 99,000 from the Central African Republic and some 115,000 from Rwanda. While the Government has reported the presence of 245,000 Rwandan refugees on Congolese territory, the biometric registration of Rwandan refugees is being carried out to confirm the exact numbers. As a result of the crisis in Burundi, as at 31 August, almost 15,000 additional refugees had arrived in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, bringing the total number of Burundian refugees to some 23,600.

30. As at 31 August, the Humanitarian Response Plan was funded at only 44 per cent or a total of $306 million. My Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Kyung-wha Kang, visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 31 August to 4 September to assess the scope of the humanitarian crisis and ensure that the crisis remains on the agenda of donors and the greater international community.

E. Economic developments

31. Although the Democratic Republic of the Congo maintained relative macroeconomic stability during the reporting period, the Government announced on 27 August that the forecast for the gross national product growth rate for 2015 was being revised down from 9.2 per cent to 8.4 per cent, mainly owing to lower copper and oil prices. The annual inflation rate increased from 1.38 per cent to 1.4 per cent in the third quarter of the year.

32. Concerns persisted about the continued decline in commodity prices, especially for copper and gold, and the related impact on export revenues, as well as delayed investments in the private sector. On 26 August, the Fédération des entreprises congolaises announced that the country's copper production, along with that of other metals, is expected to decline in 2015, mostly owing to unreliable power supplies. On 7 September, the Swiss-based company, Glencore, announced the suspension of copper production in several mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Zambia for 18 months against the backdrop of a continued decline in the price of copper on the world market.

F. Regional developments

33. Progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations of 12 December 2013 was limited. However, some efforts were made to help to expedite the repatriation of former elements of Movement of 23 March (M23) in Rwanda and Uganda, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. On 5 August, the Governments of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the International Conference signed an agreement to, inter alia, establish a task force and prepare a plan for coordinating the voluntary repatriation of the ex-M23 elements from Uganda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although the task force subsequently met in Kampala from 15 to 23 August and undertook four field missions to Bihanga camp, where the ex-M23 elements are cantoned, the leadership of the ex-M23 refused to support the planned repatriation process unless other aspects of the Nairobi Declarations relating to amnesty, the release of ex-M23 prisoners and the return of refugees,

among other issues, were addressed. On 3 September, the Ministry of Justice issued a decree granting amnesty to 94 former M23 elements cantoned at the Bihanga camp in Uganda.

34. In a bid to reinvigorate the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, a number of initiatives were taken by my Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, as reflected in my report on the implementation of the Framework (S/2015/735).

III. Mandate implementation

A. Strategic dialogue between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations

35. As outlined in my previous report, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations undertook effective steps to enter into a regular strategic dialogue to jointly develop a road map and exit strategy for MONUSCO. This included the conduct of joint assessments of the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, considering aspects related to the security situation, the protection of civilians, the restoration of State authority and the activities of MONUSCO and FARDC.

36. The review of the findings of the joint assessments of the security situation in the 28 assessed territories in North and South Kivu, the former Province Orientale and North Katanga was followed by intense discussions both at the working level and in plenary sessions co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and my Special Representative. Working group meetings to discuss the findings and reach agreement on the conclusions and recommendations were held on 6, 9 and 10 July.

37. During those discussions, the Government highlighted progress registered over the past 10 years in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the military defeat of M23; the reduction of the threat posed by other armed groups; and the increased capacity of FARDC and the national police as well as a decline in the number of human rights violations committed by their personnel. The Government noted a decrease in the number of armed elements affiliated with ADF, FRPI and FDLR, although it recognized that those groups continued to pose a threat to civilians in some areas. The Government agreed that the security situation had either worsened or remained static in 21 out of the 28 assessed territories. It highlighted that operations conducted by FARDC in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to neutralize armed groups had been welcomed by the local population, while the lack of resources continued to hamper the effective restoration of State authority, in particular with regard to police, justice and corrections. With regard to the perception of MONUSCO by the local population, the Government concluded that it was positive in North Kivu and Katanga, mixed in Province Orientale and negative in South Kivu.

38. As a conclusion to the joint assessments, the Government recommended an additional reduction of 1,865 MONUSCO troops which, in its view, are not located in conflict zones or directly involved in offensive operations. It proposed the reduction of specific units in the former province of Katanga, South Kivu, the former Province Orientale (including in Ituri) and in Kinshasa, although the

situation in the western Democratic Republic of the Congo was not reviewed as part of the joint assessments. The Government also noted that the deployment of the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade was still useful and should be maintained.

39. In keeping with the parameters outlined in resolution 2211 (2015) guiding any further gradual reduction of the MONUSCO troops, the Mission underscored the need for tangible progress on the ground that would allow for a recommendation on further reductions. MONUSCO underlined the need to reach a common understanding of the main threats from armed groups and violence against civilians, as well as national capacities to address them, based on which to determine specific targets whose achievements would trigger the gradual and progressive withdrawal of MONUSCO. To that end, the Mission proposed the development of a common campaign plan to address armed groups in a sustainable manner, which should include non-military measures aimed at restoring State authority and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, while taking measures to transform the MONUSCO Force and making it more effective. MONUSCO also emphasized the need to factor in the political risks of instability when developing the road map, which should also outline the exit strategy for the Force Intervention Brigade.

40. The two separate sets of recommendations were subsequently discussed during plenary sessions, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 11 and 21 August in Kinshasa. Reiterating the request for an immediate further reduction of the MONUSCO Force, the Government expressed disappointment over the lack of progress in the strategic dialogue and the Mission's intransigence in that regard, while disagreeing with the conditions for troop reductions outlined in resolution 2211 (2015). The Government also conveyed that the resumption of security cooperation between MONUSCO and FARDC would depend on concrete progress in the strategic dialogue. MONUSCO reiterated its proposal for a structured discussion, which would lead to the development of a joint exit strategy for MONUSCO and a road map in accordance with the parameters outlined by the Security Council.

41. On 28 August, at a meeting with the diplomatic corps, the Minister for Foreign Affairs reiterated the need for a progressive but significant reduction of MONUSCO troops as a result of the improved security situation on the ground and to prevent MONUSCO from becoming an "occupation force". Minister Tshibanda expressed frustration regarding the Mission's intransigence on the issue of troop reduction and the divergence of views. Interaction with the Government continued at all levels with a view to seeking its views on the way forward. Discussions also continued between the FARDC military hierarchy and the MONUSCO Force Commander.

42. Although the formal talks within the framework of the strategic dialogue have stalled, the process of jointly developing an exit strategy for MONUSCO, as mandated by the Security Council, remains an important shared objective for both the Government and the United Nations. Given the numerous political and security challenges that remain or that may emerge in the coming months, further discussions are needed to develop a common vision for how MONUSCO will eventually be able to leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo without reversing the gains achieved. Continued strategic discussions with the Government will also be needed to develop the recommendations on the reconfiguration of MONUSCO and its gradual drawdown, including the Intervention Brigade as requested in paragraph 43 of resolution 2211 (2015).

B. National processes and the good offices role of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

43. In keeping with the good offices mandate of my Special Representative, MONUSCO held meetings with representatives of the Government and relevant institutions as well as a range of political stakeholders and representatives of civil society in the context of the implementation of the national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and elections; the neutralization of armed groups; and the stabilization of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Elections

44. MONUSCO intensified contacts with a range of political actors across the political spectrum and civil society in the context of the electoral process. The Mission continued to assist the national independent electoral commission with limited technical assistance, pending the provision of strengthened technical assistance from other United Nations entities and international partners. The "Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo", to be funded at $123.3 million, was approved by the Election Partnership Committee and the local approval committee and signed on 27 July. The project, however, remains largely unfunded.

Security sector reform

45. Through existing coordination mechanisms, MONUSCO continued efforts to ensure greater coherence in security sector reform assistance and advice provided by international partners to the Government. MONUSCO also assumed the coordination of international partners involved in police reform.

46. MONUSCO contributed to the development of the strategic training plan for the Congolese national police, while providing accelerated basic training to 513 officers, including 29 women, in the provinces of North and South Kivu, Tanganyika and Ituri. In addition, 450 officers, including 14 women, received refresher training on maintaining public order and human rights in Beni, Bukavu, Bunia, Goma and Kisangani.

47. Through its prosecution support cells, MONUSCO continued to support Congolese military justice authorities in North Kivu province in investigating crimes allegedly perpetrated by ADF between 2014 and 2015, including through interviews with over 1,150 victims. Technical support was provided to the military justice authorities in North Kivu, South Kivu and the former Orientale and Katanga provinces for investigations and prosecutions of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious crimes allegedly perpetrated by other armed groups, FARDC and the national police.

48. The Mission and the United Nations Development Programme, together with the Government, continued implementing the joint justice support programme, including through the preparation and validation on 15 August of new oversight benchmarks for improving the efficiency and accountability of justice and corrections institutions.

49. The Mission also continued to support the re-establishment of prisons in areas cleared of armed groups. In addition, it assisted in improving prison conditions and enhancing prison security in North and South Kivu, as well as the former Orientale and Katanga provinces. MONUSCO personnel were co-located in 14 prisons in those provinces to advise national penitentiary staff and conducted regular monitoring visits to other prisons. MONUSCO supported the rehabilitation of prisons in Kalehe, Mambasa, Masisi, Mitwaba and Walikale territories.

Consolidation of State authority and stabilization

50. On 22 August, a delegation composed of representatives of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, national non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and MONUSCO carried out a joint field review of the stabilization project supported through the Peacebuilding Fund in Mambasa territory, Ituri province. The project is aimed at promoting dialogue between communities and Government authorities and supporting the restoration of State authority and economic recovery.

C. Protection of civilians and neutralization of armed groups

51. The protection of civilians remained a key area of focus for MONUSCO. The Mission maintained a significant military presence in Ituri province, where civilians are under threat from FRPI despite ongoing joint military operations against the group. MONUSCO carried out regular missions to assess the situation in areas of concern. At the same time, it made use of existing tools and mechanisms for the protection of civilians, including the community alert networks, for the timely identification of threats to civilians and to promote community resilience. The protection task force of Ituri also developed a contingency plan to mitigate threats, an integrated mapping of hotspots and a prevention-protection strategy plan for areas earmarked for operations along the Bukiringi-Aveba-Gety axis.

52. In Beni territory, North Kivu province, the plan for the protection of civilians was updated in the context of FARDC-led operations against ADF. The aim is to better combine military actions with non-military initiatives and community-based protection tools such as the community alert networks and to enhance engagement with local populations through outreach, sensitization and dialogue activities.

53. In Tanganyika province, MONUSCO and United Nations agencies continued to work with local authorities and other actors to de-escalate the conflict between the Twa and Luba communities. The Mission also reinforced its deployment in Nyunzu. This included a Force deployment to support FARDC patrolling and presence, small-scale conflict resolution initiatives, support for the activities of humanitarian agencies, conducting a human rights investigation and advocating for a strengthened response by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Within the scope of the resolution of the Twa and Luba conflict, MONUSCO police in Manono sensitized the Congolese national police in several localities on the concept of community policing.

54. Community focal points transmitted an average of 200 early warning alerts per month through the community alert networks established by MONUSCO. The Congolese authorities responded to 47.5 per cent (FARDC and the Congolese national police — 40.7 per cent; local civilian authorities — 6.8 per cent) of the

alerts and MONUSCO to 12.5 per cent. In the case of about 27.8 per cent of the alerts, the related incidents often occurred in remote, inaccessible areas. Other obstacles included the relatively small army and police deployments in the nearby areas, often without logistics, or the immediate withdrawal of assailants before a response could be organized. Over 100 community protection committees continued to manage local protection plans in conflict-affected areas aimed at improving preventive responses by Congolese authorities, United Nations agencies and MONUSCO.

D. Transformation of the Force

55. MONUSCO is finalizing its Force transformation plan, which is designed to achieve a more robust, agile and mobile Force, matching military capability to operational requirements on the ground. This transformation will encompass new capabilities to help the Mission to more effectively implement its mandate, including enablers and rapidly deployable battalions.

E. Safety and security of United Nations personnel within the context of operations of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

56. There was no discernible increase in threats to United Nations personnel in the country as a result of their military operations against armed groups. Following a reassessment of security risks in the Beni area, North Kivu and the implementation of additional security measures, non-essential staff who had been previously relocated returned to Beni on 25 June. In keeping with the usual procedures, threat and security risk assessments for the eastern part of the country were reviewed on a monthly basis in order to reflect any changes and adjust security measures accordingly.

F. Monitoring the implementation of the arms embargo

57. The Mission continued its efforts to monitor the arms embargo, including through supporting the Group of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1533 (2004). Relevant information on flows of military personnel, arms and related materiel across the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was shared with the Group of Experts.

G. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration/disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

58. Progress in the implementation of the third national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan was hampered by a lack of funding from the Government. The Unité d'exécution du programme national de désarmement, démobilisation et réintegration continued to conduct reinsertion activities in Kamina, Lomami province and in Kitona, Kongo-Central province and has demobilized, with the support of MONUSCO, 5,385 combatants and dependants

since 25 June. In addition, the camp in Kotakoli, Nord Ubangui province, was finally closed on 26 June by the Government with support from MONUSCO. With the closure, 1,411 ex-combatants and dependants were transported by the Government, with logistical support from MONUSCO, to the Kamina camp. This brought the total number of ex-combatants in Kamina to 2,648 accompanied by 408 dependants, while in Kitona, there are 2,216 ex-combatants and 19 dependants.

59. From 15 June to 15 September, MONUSCO bore the full costs of the logistical support, including food and reinsertion kits, for up to 5,385 former combatants and dependants currently sheltered in the camps in Kamina and Kitona. On 20 August, MONUSCO informed the Government that it would be obliged to stop covering these costs by mid-September and that the Government would need to assume this responsibility as envisaged under the third national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan. Subsequently, on 20 August, the Government informed MONUSCO that it was making a second pledge of $1.5 million to the plan, which, if committed, would represent 30 per cent of the total $10 million it had originally promised.

60. The Mission continued to support efforts to encourage the disarmament of foreign and Congolese combatants. From 25 June to 14 August, 385 former members of Congolese armed groups (232 adult ex-combatants, 139 children and 14 dependants) and 72 members of foreign armed groups (25 adult ex-combatants, 6 children and 41 dependants) voluntarily entered the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement programme. With regard to the stalled FDLR voluntary disarmament process, as at 14 August, 308 FDLR combatants and 1,028 dependants remained in assembly camps in Kanyabayonga (North Kivu province), Kisangani (Tshopo province) and Walungu (South Kivu province). Despite the commitment of the Government to support the operation of the Kisangani camp, in July, its support ceased owing to a lack of funds. Although the Mission continued to provide emergency support, including food and medicine, MONUSCO may not be in a position to continue such support beyond the end of September.

H. Mine action

61. The United Nations Mine Action Service conducted clearance activities to deal with explosive remnants of war throughout the area of operations of the MONUSCO Force. The Service destroyed 39 explosive remnants of war in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri provinces.

I. Promotion and protection of human rights and the fight against impunity

62. An increase in reported cases of arbitrary arrests and harassment of civil society activists and media representatives was observed, particularly in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

63. Agence nationale de renseignements agents reportedly arrested three civilians working for the national newspaper *CNews* on 13 July in Kinshasa. They also

reportedly harassed and summoned four individuals working for the independent television and radio station Radiodiffusion et télévision debout Kasaï in Mbuji Mayi (Kasai Oriental province) on 12 August, who were involved in reporting on activities of the political opposition or on alleged corruption involving high-ranking officials.

64. Since the beginning of 2015, over 123 human rights violations have been documented in the context of the electoral process. They were mainly registered in the provinces of North Kivu, Kinshasa, South Kivu and the former province of Kasaï Oriental. These violations were primarily committed by the Congolese national police and the Agence nationale de renseignements, while the victims were mostly associated with political parties, media representatives and civil society activists. Slow progress was made in the judicial proceedings in the cases of several human rights defenders and political activists detained at the main prison in Kinshasa, who had been arrested for their involvement in political activities.

65. Armed groups continued to commit human rights abuses throughout the eastern part of the country during the period under review. From July to August, the main alleged perpetrators were FRPI (82 abuses), FDLR (71 abuses) and LRA (68 abuses). The most common abuses committed by these groups were related to the right to physical integrity, such as beatings, ill treatment and rapes. FARDC soldiers were also responsible for human rights violations against civilians, most of which took place in areas of ongoing operations. The violations were often perpetrated in connection with the victims' perceived affiliation with armed groups. During the reporting period, grave human rights abuses, including killings, abductions and rapes, were also committed by ethnic militia in the context of the Luba and Pygmy conflict in Tanganyika province.

66. MONUSCO continued to monitor, analyse and report on the human rights situation. The Mission also reviewed its implementation of the United Nations human rights due diligence policy and updated its standard operating procedures in consultation with relevant authorities.

J. Sexual violence

67. MONUSCO documented 114 victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including 19 girls. Armed groups were responsible for 83 per cent of the incidents. FRPI attacks on villages in Irumu territory (Ituri province) continued and almost systematically led to conflict-related sexual violence, including mass rapes. At least 11 out of the 13 victims of sexual violence incidents documented during July were gang raped by FRPI elements. Five of the victims were children.

68. FARDC soldiers were also allegedly involved in 12 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, including three minors. During the reporting period, six FARDC soldiers and three Congolese national police officers were convicted for sexual violence crimes and received sentences ranging from 3 to 20 years in prison.

69. MONUSCO and other United Nations agencies continued to provide technical support and advice in respect of the implementation of national policies aimed at fighting sexual violence, including the implementation of the national action plans, the fight against impunity and improved coordination of responses.

K. Child protection

70. The continued recruitment of children by armed groups, attacks on schools and the displacement of children, mainly in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, remain a cause for concern. As at 10 August, the Mission had facilitated the separation of 277 children (253 boys and 24 girls) from both foreign and Congolese armed groups. Over two thirds of the total were separated from FDLR (84), followed by Mayi-Mayi Raia Mutomboki (68) and FRPI (41).

71. On 24 August, MONUSCO met with the Office of the Prime Minister to share a list of key presumed child recruiters, most of whom are affiliated with armed groups. As a result, the Government promptly informed MONUSCO that it would open prosecutions against all alleged perpetrators on the list.

IV. Observations

72. I am concerned about the prevailing political tensions in the context of the electoral process, as well as the related incidents and human rights violations. I welcome the continued efforts by President Kabila to reach out to stakeholders across the political spectrum and initiate a national dialogue aimed at forging consensus around the unfolding electoral process. I am encouraged that national stakeholders from across the political spectrum were given the opportunity to express their views and I urge the Government to consider all opinions in moving forward. I call upon all parties and institutions to work together to resolve their differences in a peaceful manner and to achieve a lasting consensus on the elections that genuinely reflects the will of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with the Constitution.

73. Reaching consensus on the electoral process will require a genuine commitment to hold elections within the limits of the Constitution and to address outstanding issues that risk undermining public confidence in and the credibility of the process. It also requires creating political space for the opposition and civil society to participate, including by respecting the freedom of assembly and expression. All segments of society should also refrain from any action that is likely to exacerbate tensions in the context of the elections. Following the decision of the Constitutional Court, there is a need for a new and realistic electoral calendar and decision on the registration of voters who have become eligible since 2011. A commitment by the Government to secure adequate funding and support to ensure timely preparations is also required. The precipitous découpage of the provinces has added an additional layer of complexity to the process. I urge the Government to provide the necessary funding and support to ensure the installation and administration of the new provinces in accordance with the Constitution. The United Nations and the wider international community stand ready to support all Congolese stakeholders as they seek to build consensus around an electoral process that respects the Constitution, human rights and fundamental political rights and freedoms.

74. I remain concerned about the continued violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where armed groups continue to attack civilians with impunity. I strongly condemn the atrocities committed by armed groups, in particular in the Beni area. The threat from armed groups remains real and deadly

for the men, women and children living in large parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. More needs to be done to reduce the threat posed by Congolese and foreign armed groups, particularly FDLR, and bring down violence against civilians to a level that can be effectively managed by Congolese justice and security institutions. This will not only require more effective military operations but also sustainable initiatives to address the underlying causes of violence, through national reforms and the establishment of an effective presence of the State in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I commend the national security forces for their efforts in conducting military operations against ADF, FDLR, FRPI and some Mayi-Mayi groups. I encourage the Government to join forces with MONUSCO to increase the effectiveness of the overall effort to neutralize these armed groups and reduce further loss of life among civilians. I also urge FARDC, through military operations and non-military initiatives, to restore State authority and find lasting solutions for former combatants.

75. The lack of progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations of 12 December 2013 carries risks both for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. More than 18 months have passed since the signing of the agreement which formally ended the M23 rebellion. However, the envisaged repatriation of ex-M23 members from Rwanda and Uganda remains stalled, aggravating mistrust among some regional actors. I commend the continued leadership of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on this matter and the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to cooperate and move the process forward. I encourage all concerned stakeholders to translate their commitments into action and find durable political solutions to the obstacles preventing the repatriation of former M23 combatants and their reinsertion and reintegration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is a risk that further delays in implementing the Nairobi Declarations could lead to a re-emergence of the group.

76. Preventing former combatants from taking up arms again is an important factor in stabilizing the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I encourage the Government to build on its national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, which was an important step, and demonstrate its commitment by providing the necessary funding to support the programme and the voluntary disarmament process of FDLR. The importance of a well-planned, funded and executed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, including sustained support for the reintegration of former combatants and their families, cannot be overemphasized. It is essential to the consolidation of State authority in the eastern part of the country and to efforts to reconcile local communities. These are important obligations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the national commitments of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. I urge the Government to disburse the needed funds rapidly and take steps to begin the longer-term sustainable reintegration of these former militia and their families, which should go hand in hand with efforts to support and rebuild local communities, which are the most affected by armed conflict.

77. I would like to thank the Government for its efforts to constructively engage with MONUSCO on issues of concern in the context of the strategic dialogue. I take note of the position of the Government that MONUSCO should further reduce its troops before the end of 2015. A gradual and progressive withdrawal of MONUSCO that preserves gains made to date is a shared objective that we must continue to

strive to achieve. This will require further structured discussions between the Government and the United Nations and the broader international community. I encourage the Government to pursue discussions with the United Nations in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence. I urge it to clarify its vision for the coming years, including on how to ensure that MONUSCO is eventually able to leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo without reversing the gains that have been achieved. The dialogue is an opportunity to redefine and strengthen the partnership between the Government and the United Nations. A strong partnership and close cooperation, including on military operations, would greatly facilitate the transfer of responsibilities from MONUSCO to the Government and the Mission's eventual exit from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A jointly agreed, realistic road map would also contribute to reassuring international partners and the Congolese people that the country is on an irreversible path to stability and development.

78. In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude to my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Martin Kobler, and all staff of MONUSCO and the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other international and regional organizations. I also wish to thank the troop- and police-contributing countries for their active engagement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the service of peace.

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